DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 440 223 CE 079 970

AUTHOR	Frankenburger, Lydia
TITLE	Contacting Students To Raise Retention Rates. Action Research Monograph.
PUB DATE	1999-00-00
NOTE	12p.; In: Action Research Monographs. Complete Set. Pennsylvania Action Research Network, 1998-99. A Section 353 Project of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education. A Learning from Practice Project; see CE 079 962.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Persistence; Action Research; Adult Basic Education; Attitudes; Community Education; Dropout Research; *Dropouts; *High School Equivalency Programs; *Outreach Programs; Program Development; Program Effectiveness; Questionnaires; Records (Forms); Rural Areas; Rural Education; *School Holding Power; Student Recruitment; Teacher Researchers
IDENTIFIERS	*General Educational Development Tests; Pennsylvania; 353 Project

ABSTRACT

This research project was conducted to identify the reasons for the low retention rate for adult students enrolled in the prep level of the General Educational Development (GED) programs offered by the Clinton County (Pennsylvania) Development Center for Adults. All adult students who attended class at least once from July 1998 through January 1999 and who had not met their goals or returned to class were contacted by telephone to encourage them to return to the program. Students were also briefly interviewed to determine why they quit class. If students were not reached by phone after three attempts, they were sent letters. The project goal was to convince at least 10% of the students to return to the GED program. Of the 40 students contacted, 10 (25%) returned to class at least once. The following were among the reasons given by students for quitting class: health problems; rehabilitation; passed the GED test; incarcerated; home problems; attending another program; death in family; no driver's license; tutor wanted; too busy, no babysitter, moved, holidays, newly employed, and car problems. Appended are the student contact form, student contact letter, and the list of reasons why people quit attending class.) (MN)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

BUREAU OF ADULT BASIC & LITERACY EDUCATION

able

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Special Project

A Learning From Practice Project

Action Research Monograph

ED 440 223

PENNSYLVANIA ACTION RESEARCH NETWORK
1998-99

Monograph Title:

Contacting Students to Raise Retention Rates

Action Researcher's Name:

Lydia Frankenburger

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

For further project detail contact:
The Pennsylvania Action Research Network
c/o Adult Education Graduate Program
Penn State University, McKeesport Campus
University Drive
McKeesport PA 15132

A Section 353 Project of the
Pennsylvania Department of Education,
Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education

Contact State Literacy Resource Center for Additional copies.

CE 071 970

This monograph is a result of a Learning From Practice project developed by The Pennsylvania State University, under support from the U.S. Department of Education, through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Adult Basic and Literacy Education; however, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and no official endorsement should be inferred.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PRODUCT

"Pennsylvania Action Research Network:
Staff Development Through
Six Professional Development Centers"

Project Number 099-99-9010
July 1998-June 1999

Project Director
Dr. Gary Kuhne
Assistant Professor and Regional Director of Adult Education
The Pennsylvania State University

Note: Action Research is a process of systematic inquiry credited to Kurt Lewin who popularized it in the U.S. in the 1940"s. Today it is considered a system of qualitative research. Typical of action research, none of the individual projects in this monograph series claims to have generalizable application beyond the specific project described. However, each monograph report can serve to be illustrative, instructive and provides the potential for replication in other locations. For a level of generalizability, it is recommended that the reader seek common patterns in the monograph reports in this series, and the wider literature, or contact the Action Research Network for assistance in this.

I. ABSTRACT

The Clinton County Development Center for Adults conducted a research project to find out why there is a low retention rate for adult students at the GED Prep level enrolled in our GED programs. The project involved contacting students who attended class at least one time from July 1, 1998 through January 31, 1999 and have not met their goals and have not returned to class to try to encourage them to return to the program. The first contact was a telephone call in which a short interview was conducted; the attempted telephone contact was repeated up to three times. If no contact was made after the third attempt, a letter was sent to the student. The telephone calls and letters were made or sent from December 15, 1998 through March 31, 1999. The project would be considered a success if 10% of the students contacted returned to class by April 1, 1999. Also, improvements may be made to the program from the interview responses.

II. PROBLEM

The Clinton County Development Center for Adults conducts ABE/GED classes in three rural locations in Clinton County. Two sites are community based; one site is at the county prison. This research project focused on learners in the two community based sights located in Lock Haven and a small site in Renovo. The Development Center serves ESL, Beginning Literacy, Beginning ABE, Intermediate ABE, GED Prep, and Adult Secondary students. The students range in age from 17 years old to 55 years old. Students participate in small class activities, one on one instruction, volunteer tutor assistance, self-directed assignments, and computer based lessons. Class size varies from week to week from around three students to twelve students. All classes are open entry-open exit.

The problem is that several participants quit attending class without any indication that they were not coming back. They did not give any reason for not continuing with the program, so it is had to make improvements to keep retention up. If the problem of retention was solved, our program would be able to help more people meet their goals and we would be able to keep numbers up in the classes.

III. PLANNING

A. Intervention:

LitPro will be used to check attendance records for the classes to see who is not attending class, who is at the GED Prep level, and to get phone numbers and addresses of those students who need to be contacted. A contact sheet (Appendix A) will be developed to ask uniform questions to the students contacted. Telephone contacts will be made; up to three-attempted phone calls will be made to each student. If a student is not contacted after three attempts, a letter (Appendix B) will be sent to that student requesting he/she return to class.

All information from the contact sheets will be analyzed and recorded. On April 1, 1999 attendance records on LitPro will be checked to see whom, if anyone returned to class. The people who returned to class will be recorded and their contact sheets will be checked to see the reasons they had not been attending.

B. Time frame:

The time frame of the project will be Mid-December 1998-April 1, 1999. Analyzing the data will take two weeks longer (April 15, 1999).

C. Materials:

Telephone- to call students

LitPro Data Base- to check attendance and get student records

Computer- for data base and typing form (Appendix A) and letters to students (Appendix B)

Pens and paper- to record data

D. Data collecting strategies:

The data collection strategies to be used are interviews, data analysis, and journal keeping.

E. Baseline:

Students who attended class at least one time from July 1, 1998 through January 31, 1999 who no longer attend class and have not met their goals.

F. Criteria for success:

The goal of this project is to get students to return to ABE/GED class. A success rate will be if at least 10% of the students contacted return to class at least one time.

G. Constraints:

Students may have moved, changed phone numbers, or are not willing to speak about the program.

H. Problem statement:

Will telephone or mail contacts to GED Prep level students, who are no longer attending the ABE/GED program help bring back 10% of the contacted students to the program?

IV. ACTION

A. Steps of the intervention:

LitPro was used to check attendance records for the classes to see who was not attending class, who was at the GED Prep level, and to get phone numbers and addresses of those students who needed to be contacted. A contact sheet (Appendix A) was developed to ask uniform questions to the students contacted. Telephone contacts were made; up to three-attempted phone calls were made to each student. If a student was not contacted after three attempts, a letter (Appendix B) was sent to that student requesting he/she return to class. During the project, forty people were called and two letters were mailed.

On April 7, 1999 attendance records on LitPro were checked to see whom, if anyone returned to class in the allocated time period (Mid-December, 1998 - April 1, 1999). The number returning to class at least one time was ten. The people who returned to class were recorded and their contact sheets were checked to see the reasons they had not been attending. All information from the contact sheets and attendance records were analyzed and recorded (see Appendix C for the list of reasons people quit attending class).

B. Time line:

The time line for this projected started Mid-December, 1998 and ran through April 15, 1999. This is when the data analysis was completed

C. Materials:

Telephone- to call students

LitPro Data Base- to check attendance and get student records

Computer- for data base and typing form (Appendix A) and letters to students (Appendix B)

Pens and paper- to record data

D. Constraints:

Some students moved and changed phone numbers. A couple of students were not cooperative speaking about the program; they just did not want to be bothered. One student was incarcerated. Time was a constraint; it was not always easy to have a time slot available to make telephone calls.

V. RESULTS

The result of this Action Research project is positive. The goal of the project was to get 10% of the students contacted to return to class at least one time. Forty students were contacted and ten returned to class at least once for a 25% return rate.

VI. REFLECTION

The Development Center for Adults in Lock Haven will continue to contact students who no longer attend class without giving any notice. The positive results show that it is worth continuing to help with retention. Contacting students though telephone calls and/or letters does help raise the retention rate in ABE/GED classes.

Appendix A

Student Contact Form

Name: _____ Phone: (H) _____

Site: _____ (W) _____

Level: _____

Contact Attempts: (Try to speak personally)

Date: _____ Time: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____

Best Time to Call: _____

Say something to this effect, "We haven't seen you in a while. Please consider picking back up with the GED program." Also remind the student of the times of the classes.

Continued on next page

Question #1: Please give reasons why you stopped attending GED classes.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Question #2: What could the DCA do or change to help you meet your goal?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

What date do you anticipate returning to GED classes?

_____

Date of first return: _____

Appendix B

Date

Name
Address
City, State, Zip

Dear **name**:

We miss you at GED/Brush-up class! We have not seen you lately and would like to know how you are doing. Is there anything we can do to help you achieve your goal?

For your information, The Development Center for Adults holds classes on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9:00 AM-11:30 AM and Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:00 PM-8:30 PM in Lock Haven. A class is also held at the Renovo Library on Thursdays at 2:00 PM-4:30 PM.

Call us anytime if you need any information or would like to speak with one of us.

We hope to see you soon.

Sincerely,

Instructors' names
Instructors

Appendix C

List of reasons people quit attending ABE/GED classes.

An asterisk (*) beside the reason indicates if the person returned to class after giving that reason for not attending class.

Heath problems

Rehabilitation *

Passed test ** (returned for brush-up)

Incarcerated

Home problems

Attending another program

Death in family

No driver's license *

Tutor wanted

Too busy *

No babysitter*

Moved

Holidays

Newly employed **

Car problems *

No motivation

Family emergency

No particular reason *